Fact Sheet March 2003

Changes to California's Universal Waste Regulations



REGULATIONS FOR MANAGING SOME COMMON HAZARDOUS ITEMS

DTSC is one of six Boards and **Departments within** the California **Environmental** Protection Agency. DTSC's mission is to restore, protect and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, *environmental* quality and economic vitality, by regulating hazardous waste. conductingand overseeing cleanups, and developing and promotingpollution prevention.

State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency



Background

Universal wastes are common household or business waste items that require special care in disposal to prevent harm to people or the environment. California's universal waste regulations allow individuals and businesses that use, collect, transport, and recycle universal wastes to follow reduced requirements compared to those for most hazardous wastes. Universal wastes generally may not be disposed of in the regular trash. Most universal wastes must be taken or sent to a recycling facility or (in some cases) a landfill approved for disposing of hazardous wastes.

Introduction

New regulations went into effect in 2003 to expand California's Universal Waste regulations to include certain products that have added lead or mercury. Both lead and mercury are toxic to people and to wildlife. If people improperly dispose of items that contain lead or mercury, the metals can contaminate soil and water. Under the new regulations, people who handle some common waste items that contain lead or mercury may do so under the universal waste requirements.

New Universal Waste Items

Cathode Ray Tubes (CRTs) and devices that contain them such as the picture tubes on many televisions and computer monitors. These items may contain toxic amounts of lead.

Consumer Electronic Devices (CEDs) such as cell phones, microwave ovens, answering machines, telephones, computer equipment, video cassette recorders, radios, and stereos. These items may contain lead and other toxic metals.





Products that contain mercury

These regulations designate several types of discarded products with added mercury as universal wastes. They include:

- Dental amalgam
- Pressure or vacuum gauges used in laboratories and health care facilities

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our web site at www.dtsc.ca.gov.







Waste items that contain mercury are a danger to the environment. New laws will ensure that they are disposed of safely.

- Counterweights and dampers used in grandfather clocks, archery bows, and shotguns
- Thermometers
- Dilators and weighted tubing used in some medical procedures
- Rubber flooring in some older gymnasiums
- Gas flow regulators in older gas meters

Some of the items identified as universal wastes in the new regulations were not previously considered hazardous wastes. Regardless of their mercury concentrations, those items will be classified as hazardous and as universal wastes when the regulations that apply to them go into effect. They include:

- Mercury light switches found in some vehicles (effective 2005)
- Non-automotive mercury switches (effective 2006)
- Lamps with added mercury, including all fluorescent tubes (effective 2004)
- Novelty items with added mercury such as some toys and clothing that light up and make sounds (effective 2004)

The requirements for people who use, store, transport, recycle, and dispose of (when allowed) universal wastes are found in chapter 23 of title 22 of the California Code of Regulations. For more information on the Universal Waste Rule, visit DTSC's Web site at www.dtsc.ca.gov.



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If you have a question or need more information, please contact DTSC's regional Public and Business Liaisons at (800) 72TOXIC (1-800-728-6942) or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov.

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